Benzodiazepine Information Sheet (Adult)

Benzodiazepines are powerful medications that can be used for many different reasons. They can be used to help people with anxiety and/or panic disorders. They can also help people who have seizures or have muscle spasms. They may not be right for all patients, and may be dangerous if they are not used the way they are intended. You are being given this sheet to tell you about the risks of using benzodiazepines. Your doctor will keep in mind these risks, along with benefits, and work with you to decide whether your medication needs to be adjusted or stopped.

Dose Levels: Your dose may change depending on the medication you are using and what you are using it for. Here are some of the more common benzodiazepines, and the different doses you may see. Every person is different, and may require a different dose. Some of these doses may be broken down into multiple doses a day. You may not need to take these medications every day. Some people take them only as needed.

- Alprazolam (Xanax®)
  - Anxiety: 1.25 mg to 4 mg per day
  - Panic disorder: 3 mg to 6 mg per day

- Clonazepam (Klonopin®)
  - Panic disorder: 0.5 mg to 4 mg per day
  - Seizures: 1.5 mg to 20 mg per day

- Diazepam (Valium®)
  - Anxiety: 4 mg to 40 mg per day
  - Muscle spasms: 6 mg to 40 mg per day
  - Seizures: 4 mg to 40 mg per day

- Lorazepam (Ativan®)
  - Anxiety: 1 mg to 10 mg per day

Possible Early Side Effects (with early and short-term use; may continue with long-term use)
- Changes in appetite (eating more or eating less)
- Hard stools (constipation)
- Dry mouth
- Becoming sleepy or tired
- Decreased sex drive
- Changes in the way you think or act
  - May cause confusion, forgetfulness, and clumsiness
- Low blood pressure
  - May cause lightheadedness

Possible Late Side Effects (after taking the medication regularly for two weeks; hard to predict and may happen suddenly)
- Tolerance
  - Needing more of the medication for the same relief
- Weight gain
- Changes in your skin
- Changes in the way you think or act
  - May cause sadness
  - May cause severe sadness that leads to suicide
- Dependence
  - May have withdrawal symptoms if you suddenly stop taking the medication
  - Withdrawal symptoms can include: increased anxiety, trouble sleeping, upset stomach, headache, and shakiness
**How to Store Medication**

- **NOT** in your bathroom medicine cabinet
- **NOT** above your stove
- **NOT** in a hot car
- Away from heat, light, and moisture
- Away from children
- Away from pets
- Recommend a safe or other locked box or locked drawer

**How to Dispose of Leftover Medication**

- Talk to your pharmacist
- Contact your local police station
- Look for national drug take-back days

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**Possible Issues with Ongoing Benzodiazepine Use**

**Misuse** - Taking more medication than prescribed to get rid of anxiety

**Abuse** - Taking the medication for any reason other than the original diagnosis

**Addiction** – Continuing to look for and use these medications even though it may result in bad legal, social, physical, or mental health outcomes

**Diversion** - Giving away or selling your medication to anyone else - *This is against the law.*

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**Special Warning about Benzodiazepines**

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently announced a new warning. This warning is about the combination of benzodiazepines and opioids. Opioids are powerful medications that are used to relieve early and long-lasting cancer and non-cancer pains.

When opioids and benzodiazepines are taken at the same time, patients have increased risk of dangerous side effects. These side effects include:

- Extreme sleepiness
- Having a hard time breathing or extremely slow breathing
- Coma
- Death

It is important to be aware of these risks. Make sure you take your medication exactly as prescribed by your doctor. If you are taking an opioid and a benzodiazepine at the same time, do not take more than prescribed. When you take your medication correctly, you decrease your risk for these dangerous side effects.